

Elementary School Lesson 1

Civic Duty: What Does It Take to Be a Good Citizen?

Materials Needed

**Indicates material included at the end of the lesson.*

- For the teacher:
 - Large chart paper
 - Chart markers
 - Concept Web Sample*
 - *Abe Lincoln's Hat* by Martha Brenner or *Grace's Letter to Lincoln* by Peter and Connie Roop
- For the students:
 - Pencils, paper
 - 3-2-1 Activity*

Vocabulary

- *Citizen*: A member of a community, state, or nation. A citizen lives in a community and has certain rights and responsibilities.
- *Citizenship*: The act of practicing one's rights and responsibilities as a member of a community, state, or nation.
- *Rights*: The "unalienable rights" in the U.S. Constitution were also called "natural rights"—the Bill of Rights was written to protect these rights: free speech, press, petition, and assembly; freedom of religion; the right to privacy; the right to due process; and equality before the law.
- *Responsibilities*: The responsibilities of a citizen include the following: voting in public elections, being informed on civic issues, participating in voluntary associations, and participating in political activities. An individual also has a legal obligation to obey the law, to serve as a juror, and to pay taxes.

Introductory Questions

Ask the following questions and record the answers on a concept web, drawn on the board or overhead, of the attributes of a good citizen. To help students, either 1) ask the question then allow students to talk to an "elbow buddy" for a few seconds before sharing with the class (full explanation of elbow talk at end of unit) or 2) ask the question and allow students to discuss in small groups and then report their answers.

An example of one of the Concept Webs* is included.

- **What is a "citizen"?**
- **What are the "rights" of a citizen?** *Make sure to weed out incorrect answers. For example, driving, owning a house, etc.*
- **What are the "responsibilities" of a citizen?** *Some examples of civic responsibilities might include the following: not littering, participating in local and regional activities, voting in elections, running for office, and voicing opinions in a positive way.*
- **What would make a "good" citizen? How does one show "good" citizenship?** *Some answers include the following: driving the speed limit, wearing your seat belt, individual responsibility, self-discipline/self-governance, civility, respect for the rights and dignity of all individuals,*

Why Lincoln Was a Lawyer: Abraham Lincoln, the Law & Civic Education (Elementary)

honesty, respect for the law, courage, compassion, patriotism, fairness, and commitment to the common good.

Suggested Lesson Procedure

Chose an excerpt from either the story *Grace's Letter to Lincoln* or *Abe Lincoln's Hat* to read out loud to the class. As you read, stop periodically and ask students:

- **Did Lincoln have any characteristics that made him a good citizen? If so, what were they?**

Add student responses to a concept web of Abraham Lincoln.

When you are done reading, review the two webs and point out the similarities. (It might be a good idea to “code” them with a symbol or color).

If time, discuss whether Lincoln exhibited any characteristics that made him a “bad” citizen. These may or may not be added to the web. If the ideas are added, ask if the trait(s) is/are seen in others. Ask if students think Lincoln had a valid reason for acting in a way contrary to what is expected of a good citizen.

Exit Activity

Have students complete the 3-2-1 Activity*.